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The ICOMOS Approach to and Involvement in the World Heritage Sites Process

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The International Council on Monuments and Sites is an association of professionals throughout the world, that currently bring together over 9000 members from 120 countries. Each country has a National Committee and many countries have specialist and scientific committees. These specialist committees are represented at international level by some 30 International specialist or scientific committees, who unite and find cross co-operation in the ICOMOS Scientific Council.

ICOMOS works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. It is the only global non-government organization of this kind, which is dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural, archaeological and intangible heritage. Its work is based on the principles of the 1964 International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter).

Until the end of the 19th century, architectural heritage had been a matter of national concern only as most of the laws regarding the protection of historic buildings in Europe date back to that period. Countless associations existed in each country, but their scope never went beyond national borders. Cultural internationalism, as we know it today, was an outcome of the first World War, with the creation of the League of Nations, and most of all of the second World War, with the creation of the United Nations Organization and the establishment of UNESCO.

The Athens Conference (1931) on restoration of historic buildings was organized by the International Museums Office, and the Athens Charter, drafted by Le Corbusier at the fourth Assembly of the International congresses on Modern Architecture (1933) was published anonymously in Paris in 1941 both represent a major step in the evolution of ideas because they reflect a growing consciousness among specialists all over the world, and introduced for the first time in history the concept of international heritage.

The Venice Charter was born from the need to create an association of specialists of conservation and restoration independent of the already existing associations of museologists, ICOM. In 1957, in Paris, the First Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings recommended that the countries which still lack a central organization for the protection of historic

buildings provide for the establishment of such an authority and, in the name of UNESCO, that all member states of UNESCO join the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) based in Rome.

The Second Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings, in Venice in 1964, adopted 13 resolutions, the first one being the International Restoration Charter, better known as Venice Charter, and the second one, put forward by UNESCO, provided for the creation of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS.) UNESCO now has 3 principle advisory bodies especially with respect to matters relating to World Heritage sites. ICCROM, ICOMOS, and UICN (World Conservation Union.) International engagement in the conservation of the authors own specialism earthen building materials, archaeology and architecture, through ISCs, was first reflected in a series of still continuing and very active international conferences, which were instigated by ICOMOS in the 1970's. These conferences are intended to encourage an exchange of information, as a means to achieve greater understanding in earth studies and preservation efforts led by archaeologists, architects and conservation scientists. Over 36 years the focus of the "Terra" conferences has changed from archaeological sites, to standing earthen architecture, training, the use of chemicals in conservation, management planning, earthen cultural landscapes, disaster preparedness and mitigation, historic techniques informing new construction and many broader issues relating to the topic. The papers produced from these conferences reflect the range of work being carried out, the extraordinary international partnerships being forged and the approaches to earthen architecture in an international context. The Terra papers and other contributions to these conferences represent the significant part of the literature and research related to the field of earthen architectural study.

ICOMOS at Work

Having established the Scientific or International committees, under the guidance of the World Heritage Convention, which is discussed in greater detail, and from which excerpts are quoted below, cultural heritage has gained in importance as a worldwide influence.

An example of this may be that many countries in conflict will share a culture and heritage in the past. For instance, Israel and Lebanon, or Syria and Jordan, have shared heritage in the past. Cultural properties do not directly involve anything to do with present human problems, politics or philosophy, but archeological sites and standing structures and so on. This means that cultural heritage can remain as a less controversial doorway between such countries, and encourage trans-boundary communication and co-operation.

ICOMOS is the advisor to UNESCO for both cultural and mixed properties, and we are required to evaluate the nominations of properties, monitor the state of conservations, review international assistance requests, and provide input and support for capacity building. The evaluation is held every year and all the countries which wish to have properties nominated in the World Heritage list submit a nomination dossier to UNESCO. UNESCO officer then check the dossier for its completeness. After this, all dossiers will be passed to ICOMOS. The ICOMOS World Heritage Working Group, a group of experts, evaluates the quality of the application, the rules within which the applicant country has placed for the protection of the sites and/or protective buffer zones. A desk assessor will look at the nomination as a critical intellectual contribution. If a

nomination dossier is not complete, or if further questions should be raised, ICOMOS can send an advisor to the state party, and he/she can clarify points in order to present a more complete and valid nomination dossier. The advisors then present the dossier to the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel, make recommendations, and the panel will discuss the quality of the application defining recommendations to be offered to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

The most important aspect is to discuss whether the property has outstanding universal value; cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.

ICOMOS and the World Heritage Operational Guidelines

(Including direct excerpts from the World Heritage Convention and operational guidelines)

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention aim to facilitate the implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage by setting forth the procedure for:

- a) the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger;
- b) the protection and conservation of World Heritage properties;
- c) the granting of International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund; and
- d) the mobilization of national and international support in favor of the Convention.

The key users of the Operational Guidelines are:

- a) the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention;
- b) the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.
- c) the UNESCO World Heritage Centre as Secretariat to the World Heritage Committee.
- d) the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee ;
- e) site managers, stakeholders and partners in the protection of World Heritage properties.

Advisory Bodies.

The Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee are

ICCROM (the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites), and IUCN - the World Conservation Union.

31. The roles of the Advisory Bodies are to:

- a) advise on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the field of their expertise;
- b) assist the Secretariat, in the preparation of the Committee's documentation, the agenda of its meetings and the implementation of the Committee's decisions;
- c) assist with the development and implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative,

Balanced and Credible World Heritage List. Training Strategy, Periodic Reporting, and the strengthening of the effective use of the World Heritage Fund;

- d) monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and review requests for International
- e) in the case of ICOMOS and IUCN evaluate properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List and present evaluation reports to the Committee; and
- f) attend meetings of the World Heritage Committee and the Bureau in an advisory capacity.

The specific role of ICOMOS in relation to the Convention includes: evaluation of properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List, monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage cultural properties, reviewing requests for International Assistance submitted by States Parties, and providing input and support for capacity building activities.

UNESCO Conventions

Cultural and natural heritage are defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the World Heritage Convention.

Article 1

For the purposes of this Convention, the following shall be considered as “cultural heritage”;

- monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view.

Article 2

For the purposes of this Convention, the following shall be considered as “natural heritage”:

- natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view; geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

Mixed Cultural and Natural Heritage

46. Properties shall be considered as “mixed cultural and natural heritage” if they satisfy a part or the whole of the definitions Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of both cultural and natural heritage laid out in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

Cultural landscapes

47. Cultural landscapes are cultural properties and represent the “combined works of nature and of man” designated in Article 1 of the Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.

Movable Heritage

48. Nominations of immovable heritage which are likely to become movable will not be considered.

Outstanding universal value

49. Outstanding universal value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole. The Committee defines the criteria for the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List. The Committee considers a property as having outstanding universal value if the property meets one or more of the following criteria.

Nominated properties shall therefore :

- (i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- (ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- (iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- (iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- (v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- (vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria) ;

The criteria for natural sites are not included in this lecture.

Integrity and/or Authenticity.

To be deemed of outstanding universal value, a property must also meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity and must have an adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding.

79. Properties nominated under criteria (i) to (vi) must meet the conditions of authenticity, which includes the Nara Document on Authenticity, provides a practical basis for

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- examining the authenticity of such properties.
80. The ability to understand the value attributed to the heritage depends on the degree to which information sources about this value may be understood as credible or truthful. Knowledge and understanding of these sources of information, in relation to original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, and their meaning, are the requisite bases for assessing all aspects of authenticity.
 81. Judgments about value attributed to cultural heritage, as well as the credibility of related information sources, may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. The respect due to all cultures requires that cultural heritage must be considered and judged primarily within the cultural contexts to which it belongs.
 82. Depending on the type of cultural heritage, and its cultural context, properties may be understood to meet the conditions of authenticity if their cultural value (as recognized in the nomination criteria proposed) are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes including:
 - form and design;
 - materials and substance;
 - use and function;
 - traditions, techniques and management systems;
 - location and setting;
 - language, and other forms of intangible heritage;
 - spirit and feeling; and
 - other internal and external factors.
 83. Attributes such as spirit and feeling do not lend themselves easily to practical applications of the conditions of authenticity, but nevertheless are important indicators of character and sense of place, for example, in communities maintaining tradition and cultural continuity.
 84. The use of all these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined. "Information sources" are defined as all physical, written, oral, and figurative sources, which make it possible to know the nature, specificities, meaning, and history of the cultural heritage.
 85. When the conditions of authenticity are considered in preparing a nomination for a property, the State Party should first identify all of the applicable significant attributes of authenticity. The statement of authenticity should assess the degree to which authenticity is present in, or expressed by, each of these significant attributes.
 86. In relation to authenticity, the reconstruction of archaeological remains or historic buildings or districts is justifiable only in exceptional circumstances. Reconstruction is acceptable only on the basis of complete and detailed documentation and to no extent on conjecture.

Integrity

87. All properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List shall satisfy the conditions of integrity.
88. Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes. Examining the conditions of integrity, therefore requires assessing the extent to which the property:

- a) includes all elements necessary to express its outstanding universal value;
- b) is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property's significance;
- c) suffers from adverse effects of development and/or neglect. This should be presented in a statement of integrity.

Those interested in the application of the World Heritage principles, the work of the World Heritage Committee and the work of ICOMOS will achieve a better understanding by reading, in detail, the World Heritage Convention, its operational guidelines and notes. The speaker urges you to examine these sources in order to develop the discipline of the intellectual habits that are required in order to manage and develop heritage properties in General.